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THE
ANTICIPATIONS OF CARTIER'S VOYAGES,
1492-1534.

BY
JUSTIN WINSOR.

[ONE HUNDRED COPIES, PRIVATELY REPRINTED FROM THE PROCEEDINGS OF
THE MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, JANUARY, 1893.]

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IT was not long after the discovery of Columbus before it became evident to some, at least, that he had not found any part of the world neighboring to Cathay, however remotely connected with the Orient of Marco Polo the new regions might prove to be. After the return of Columbus in 1493, it is apparent that Peter Martyr hesitated to believe that Asia had been reached. It was quite clear on his second voyage that Columbus himself felt uncertain of his proximity to Asia, when, to preserve his credit with the Spanish sovereigns, he forced his companions, against the will of more than half of them, and on penalty of personal violence if they recanted, to make oath that Cuba was an Asiatic peninsula. He even took steps later to prevent one of the recalcitrant victims going back to Spain, for fear such representations would unsettle the royal faith in their having reached the fabled Orient. When the pilot, Juan de la Cosa, who was one of those forced to perjure themselves, found himself free to make Cuba an island in his map of 1500, the fact that he put no Asiatic names on the coast of a continent west of Cuba has been held to show that the doubt of its being Asia had already possessed his mind. The makers of the Cantino and Canerio maps, in 1502 and 1503 respectively, in putting in a coast for Asia distinct from this continent which La Cosa had delineated, establishes the point that as early as the first years of the sixteenth century the cartographers whose works have come down to us had satisfied themselves that areas of land of continental proportions had blocked farther progress to the west. The geographical question then uppermost was thus reduced to this: Was this barrier a new continent, or had the islands

which it was supposed would be found in the path to Asia proved to be larger than was imagined? It was Columbus's purpose in his fourth voyage to find an opening in this barrier through which to reach the territories of the Asiatic potentates and continue the circumnavigation of the earth. It may, then, well be questioned if the statement ordinarily made, that Columbus in 1506 died in ignorance of the true geographical conditions pertaining to a new continent, is true, whatever may have been his profession in the matter. There is, as we have seen, good ground for the belief that he did not mean the Spanish sovereigns to be awakened from a delusion in which he deemed it for his interests that they should remain.

When Balboa, twenty years after Columbus's discovery, made it more palpable that south of the Isthmus of Panama there was a substantial barrier to western progress, and when ten years later Magellan pierced this southern barrier at its Antarctic extremity, it still remained a problem to find out the true character of the northern barrier to western progress, and to find a place to enter the land along a northern parallel far enough to reach the historic India.

There were two waterways by which this northern land could have been explored far inland; but for forty years after the landfall of Columbus, it is not safe to affirm positively that any one had attempted to follow their channels. A local pride among the rugged sea-folk of the north of France has nevertheless presented claims for our consideration that one at least of these passages had been tried at different times early in the sixteenth century. Similar claims have been made for Portuguese mariners a little later, and before the attempt of Cartier. Hakluyt even mentions that the English had known at this early date something of this St. Lawrence region; but it is safe to say that no such record is known to-day. These great waterways lay within the two great valleys of the yet uncomprehended continent of the north, — the Mississippi and the St. Lawrence, — which at the west were so closely connected that the early explorers of the great lakes passed during the spring freshets in their canoes from one to the other, by that route which enables the modern Chicago to discharge its sewage into the Gulf of Mexico instead of the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

The striking experiences of the Spaniards at the south served to draw their attention from a due examination of the northern shores of the Gulf of Mexico ; so that Pineda in 1519, in finding a great river flowing from the north, which we now identify with the Mississippi, was not prompted to enter it in search of gold. This metal was not associated in their minds with such low regions as this river apparently drained ; and the white and turbid flow of its waters well out into the gulf, as La Salle later noticed, seems to have raised no conception of the vast area of its tributary watershed. Almost two centuries were to pass before its channel was to be fairly recognized as a great continental waterway ; and then the explorations which divulged its extent were from the north and down the stream.

The voyages of the Cabots and the Cortereals had been the outcome of a national rivalry which had sought for England and Portugal some advantage in the north to counterbalance that of Spain in the south. It will be remembered that the line of demarcation moved westerly by the treaty of Tordesillas, had thrown, it was supposed, these northern regions beyond the reach of Spanish rights. Whether the Cabots had discovered at the north a gulf to correspond with the Mexican gulf at the south, and had found an expanse of water which had already coursed another great continental valley, and by which it was practicable to go a long distance towards the west, must probably remain uncertain. Investigation in critical hands has produced a divided opinion. Just what the Portuguese, who soon followed the English into these waters, did, is also not quite certain ; and though it can hardly be proved that the Cortereals entered the great northern gulf, it seems to be evident from a Portuguese portolano of 1504, which Kunstmann has reproduced, that at this time they had not developed the entrances to this gulf north and west of Newfoundland ; while it is clear by the Reinell chart of 1505, that they had discovered but had not penetrated these passages.

The student in Europe who curiously watched the progress of geographical development beyond the sea during the sixteenth century naturally followed the revelations in the successive editions of the "Geographia" of Ptolemy, with the new maps of recent progress made to supplement those long familiar

as pertaining to the Old World. The man who made the map for the Roman Ptolemy of 1507-8 is believed to have been a companion of Cabot in these northern voyages; and this work of Johann Ruysch is the earliest engraved map which we have showing the new discoveries. This map is interesting as making more apparent than La Cosa, seven or eight years before, had done, that these new discoveries might have been in part along the coast of Asia, but not altogether so. There is no sign in it of the landlocked region where now we place the Gulf of Mexico; and in this respect it is a strong disproof of the alleged voyage of Vesputius in 1497; but it does give the beginning of a continental area, which was soon to develop, adjacent to the West Indies, into what we call North America. But at the north Ruysch places the discoveries of the English and Portuguese unmistakably on the upper Asiatic coast; and while he does not dis sever Newfoundland from the mainland, he goes some way towards doing it.

So we may say that in 1507, one working in Rome with the available material which had been gathered from the Atlantic seaports, had not yet reached a conception of this great watery portal of a continent which lies back of Newfoundland. Whether there might not have been knowledge of this great gulf in some of the seaports of northern and western France may indeed admit of doubt; and perhaps some day a dated chart may reveal the fact. We need not confidently trust the professions of Michel and other advocates of the Basques, and believe that a century before Cabot their hardy fishermen had discovered the banks of Newfoundland, and had even penetrated into the bays and inlets of the adjacent coasts. There seems, however, little doubt that very early in the sixteenth century fishing equipments for these regions were made by the Normans, as Bréard chronicles them in his "*Documents relatifs à la Normandie*."

In the very year when the Ruysch map became known in Europe (1508), it is claimed by Desmarquets and other Dieppese, solicitous for the credit of their seaport, that Thomas Aubert went eighty leagues up the St. Lawrence River. If this be true, the great northern portal was entered then for the first time, so far as we have any record. We learn from Charlevoix — too late an authority to be assuring — that Jean Denys had made a chart of the west shore of the Gulf two

years earlier (1506) ; but the evidence to prove it is wanting. This map is said to have been formerly preserved in the Paris Archives, but is not found there or elsewhere at this day. What passes for a copy of it, treasured at Ottawa, shows names of a palpably later period. If the original could be discovered, it might be found possibly that this nomenclature had been added by a more recent hand. There does not seem to be anything in the configuration of its shore lines that might not have been achieved in 1506 by an active navigator. If the outline freed from the names is genuine, it would show that there had thus early been explorations to the west of Newfoundland, which might account for the otherwise surprising delineation of the "Golfo Quadrado," or Square Gulf, which appeared on the mappemonde of Sylvanus in his edition of Ptolemy in 1511. This represents in mid-ocean in the north Atlantic a large island, little resembling Newfoundland, however, with a landlocked gulf to the west of it, shut in by a coast which in the north and south parts bends so as nearly to touch the island. That it is intended for Newfoundland and the neighboring parts admits of no question ; for the strange interior coast is considered to be the region of the Cortereal discoveries, since there is upon it a Latinized rendering of that name, *Regalis Domus*. Some explorations developing such a gulf, whether Denys's or those of others, must have already taken place, then, before 1511. After this date, for a score of years and more, this landlocked water absolutely disappears from all the maps which have come down to us, — nothing remaining but indications of its entrances by the Straits of Belle Isle and by the southern passage.

France was now to find rivalry in these waters in the renewed efforts of the Portuguese. The French had established a fishing-station in Bradore Bay, just within the Straits of Belle Isle, which they called Brest. This was early in the century ; but its precise date is difficult to determine. Showing some of the activity of the Portuguese, we have a chart of that people, of not far from 1520, which indicates that they had looked within the gulf both at the north and at the south, but not far enough to discover its open and extensive channels. If we are to believe the interpretation which some have put upon a voyage ascribed to João Alvarez Fagundes at this time, the Portuguese had attained far more knowledge of this

inner gulf than this anonymous chart indicates. Indeed, a map, made in 1563 by Lazaro Luis, has been put forward as indicating just what Fagundes had done; and this clearly gives him the credit of unveiling the hydrography of the Gulf, so that his results might be considered to exceed in accuracy those of Cartier in his first voyage. This map of Luis makes the shores of the gulf complete, except a portion of the inner coast of Newfoundland, and even gives the St. Lawrence River for a long distance from its mouth. Being made forty years and more after Fagundes, the draughtsman had the temptation to embody later results; and the map naturally starts the question if this posterior knowledge was embodied in it or not. Since Bettencourt in his "Descobrimentos dos Portuguezes" brought forward this map, in 1881-82, its pretensions in this respect have been studied, and often questioned; but Dr. Patterson, a recent Nova Scotian writer, has advocated its claims; and Harrisse in his last book, "The Discovery of North America," has committed himself to a belief in the Fagundes explorations, which he had before treated as very questionable. The unquestioned facts are these: Ancient documents mention the voyage as being for the purpose of establishing a fishing-station. The Portuguese king had also promised Fagundes control by patent of the regions which in this tentative voyage he should discover. On Fagundes's return he reported what he had found; and in accordance with his report, his king, March 13, 1521, granted to him these lands, supposed to be a new discovery. This patent describes them, presumably in accordance with Fagundes's report; and it is this description, taken in conjunction with the Luis map, which must enable us to say where Fagundes had been.

The language of the patent, not as clear as we might wish, says that the coast which he had found lay north of those known to the Spaniards and south of that visited by Cortereal, which would put it between Newfoundland and perhaps the Chesapeake, or possibly a region a little farther north than the Chesapeake. The assigned country includes, as the patent says, the Bay of Auguada, which contains three islands; a stretch of coast where are other islands, which he had named St. John, St. Peter, St. Ann, St. Anthony, and an archipelago, also named by him the Eleven Thousand Virgins; an island "close to the bank," which he called Santa Cruz, and a sec-

ond island called St. Ann. The patent closes with granting all these islands and lands to their discoverer.

On a coast so crowded with islands and bays as that of Maine and New Brunswick, — apparently the “firm land” of the description, — we need more details than the patent gives us to determine beyond dispute the geographical correspondences of these names. The inscription “Lavrador q̄ descobrio Joaom Alvarez [Fagundes]” is on the Luis map, placed on the peninsula formed by the St. Lawrence Gulf and the Atlantic. This, in the opinion of Harris, requires the Baya d’ Anguada, which is described as having a northeast and southwest extension, to be none other than the St. Lawrence Gulf. That writer is convinced that the bay was named the Watering Bay, because Fagundes must have gone through it to the outlet of its great river to fill his water-casks. He also allows that the three islands of this bay may possibly have been Prince Edward, Anticosti, and Orleans; since these islands in the Luis map are all colored yellow, like a Portuguese escutcheon placed on the map. This, however, would have carried Fagundes up the St. Lawrence River farther than he is inclined to believe; and he would rather substitute for the island of Orleans the Magdalen group or some peninsula of the gulf mistaken for an island. Harris also applies rather neatly what may be termed the “liturgical” test in respect to all the names mentioned in the patent; and he finds that the corresponding saints’ days in the Roman calendar run from June 21 to October 21. This would seem to indicate that it was in the summer and autumn, probably in 1520, when these names were applied, in accordance with a habit, common with explorers in those days, of naming landmarks after the saint on whose day they were discovered. Another proof of the voyage, also worked out by the same writer, is that names which appear on no map antedating this patent are later found for this coast on the maps known by the name of Maiollo (1527), Verrazano (1529), Viegas (1534), Harleian (1542), Cabot (1544), Freire (1546), and Descelliers (1550).

This is the nature of the evidence which makes Harris give a map, tracking the progress of Fagundes from the time he passed near the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon. By this it would appear that he coasted north the west shore of Newfoundland, and at the Straits of Belle Isle turned and followed

the Labrador coast well within the St. Lawrence River, and then returning, skirted the New Brunswick coast, that of Prince Edward's Island, Cape Breton, and Nova Scotia to the entrance of the Bay of Fundy, where he bore away seaward, and returned to Portugal. Few, we suspect, will accept this route of Fagundes as proved. Most will be content to acknowledge the fact of an acquaintance with the gulf and its neighboring waters rather than such an extent of the acquaintance.

The advocates of these Portuguese anticipations of Cartier point to the melons and cucumbers which that navigator found among the natives of the gulf region as indicating that Europeans had left the seeds of such fruits among them. They also think that Cartier's own recitals leave the impression that the Indians of the St. Lawrence had before his advent become used to European contact. It is known, however, that the Indians of the interior had long been used to resort to the shores of the gulf and its vicinity during the summer season; and it is not unlikely that by this habit, as well as by a common custom of intertribal communication, the ways of Europeans were not unknown in the interior.

A belief in a comparatively short stretch of unknown sea separating the Azores from Cathay had been no small inducement to Columbus to make his hazardous voyage. Now that the land to the west had proved so far a barrier to a farther westward way, it was in turn no small inducement to those prompted to pierce this barrier to believe that the land which confronted them was even narrower than the ocean had been thought to be. Balboa had proved how narrow the land was at Panama, and Cortes had shown that it was not wide in Mexico. How wide was it farther north?

Columbus had suspected that South America was of continental extent, because of the great volume of water which the Orinoco poured into the Gulf of Paria. Ships when out of sight of land had filled their water-casks from the water poured out by the Amazon, which told of an immense inland drainage. None of the early navigators remarked upon anything of the kind at the north. The flow of the Mississippi did not seem to impress them as indicating an enormous valley towards its source. The early maps given to portray-

ing its supposed system of drainage represent it as very scant. On the eastern seaboard of the northern continent the Alleghany range rendered it impossible for any river to have a very large volume of water. It was only when one got as far north as the St. Lawrence Gulf, and even into its inner reaches, that evidence such as had been indicative on the coast of South America could have suggested a vast continental area at the north. Therefore, before this revelation was made in the St. Lawrence River, it is not strange that there were current views against the continental character of the region lying north of the Mexican gulf and west of the country discovered by Cabot and the Cortereals. Some would believe that it was no continent at all, but only an immense archipelago, filled with passages if they could only be found. Coppo had mapped it in this way in 1525. Others had followed Oviedo in supposing that the land at the north, at one place at least, was as narrow as it was at Panama; for this historian in 1526, in his "Sumario," had first given published indication of what was for many years following known as the Sea of Verrazano. This expanse of water was imagined to fill the space now known to be occupied by the two great valleys of the upper Mississippi and the great lakes; while its easternmost waves nearly broke through the land, to mingle its waters with the Atlantic somewhere along the eastern seaboard of the present United States.

The supposition of this mysterious sea arose from an interpretation of Verrazano's experiences on the coast in 1524, which constitute the first decided and official manifestation of French activity in the new regions. This navigator is supposed to have become acquainted with the coast from Spanish Florida to the seaboard of Maine; and his explorations were held at different times to be the basis of the French claim to territory in the New World. Freville, in his "Mémoire" on the commerce of Rouen, prints a paper by Admiral Chabot, which shows that for a while it had been the intention of Francis I. to follow up this voyage of Verrazano. The political exigencies in which that French king found himself involved had caused delays; and his attention was not again seriously given to such efforts until he commissioned Cartier ten years later. During this decade Verrazano's notion of this sea beyond the barrier had become the belief of a school of geog-

raphers; and the believers in it found it not difficult to count the chances good of reaching it by a strait at some point along the Atlantic coast.

There have been two maps brought into prominence of late years, which reflect this belief. One is the map of Hieronimo da Verrazano, preserved in the College of the Propaganda at Rome, made not long after the voyage of that navigator by his brother. This chart shows this sea as a great watery wedge lying athwart the interior of the undeveloped North America, and pointing with its apex to a narrow strip of land somewhere in the latitude of Carolina. Indeed, one might suppose that the sailor brother of the cartographer had described to him a stretch of sea with an obscure distance, as he saw it above the dunes in the neighborhood of Cape Hatteras; while the cartographer himself had given his fancy play in extending it to the west. The other map has been brought within ten years to help elucidate this transient faith in such a western sea. This second chart had long been known in the Ambrosian Library at Milan as the work of the Visconte Maggiolo (Maiollo); but its full import had not been suspected, since it bore the apparent date of 1587. The Abbé Ceriani had discovered its true date to be 1527, and that somebody had changed, in sport or in mischief, the figure 2 into 8. Signor Desimoni, the archivist of Genoa and our Corresponding Member, who was at this time working on the Verrazano problem, happening in the library, was struck with the coast lines and legends on the map as being similar to those of the Propaganda map, with which he was familiar; and he first brought the Maggiolo map to the attention of students in 1882.

The Sea of Verrazano is much the same in the two maps, and their delineations of this oceanic delusion marked for a good many years yet to come a prevailing opinion as to the kind of goal the searchers for a western passage were striving to reach. The same sea is found in the well-known English map of Michael Lok, published by Hakluyt so late as 1582, — or nearly forty years after the close of the series of explorations which Cartier conducted.

While it is probable that such geographical conditions as this Sea of Verrazano supplied were a considerable incentive to Francis I. to renew his interest in explorations, the prob-

lem was complicated by another view which an eminent German geographer had espoused, and which had already been engaging attention for some ten years. The conditions of political and social life which Cortes had found in Mexico had revived the old hope that Cathay had at last been found ; and the reports of the conquerors which were sent to Europe, with all their exaggerations, were welcomed as far more nearly conforming to the descriptions of Marco Polo than anything which had been discovered among the West Indies or on the South American coasts. If the region, then, which Cortes had subdued was in truth Asia, the ocean which Magellan had crossed made an independent continent of South America only ; while the northern spaces, instead of being an archipelago or a continental barrier, must be simply an eastern extension of Asia, and its coast must border on the north Atlantic.

It is known, from the text of a little geographical treatise (1533) which has survived, that Schöner, a famous globe-maker of Germany, had made a terrestrial sphere in 1523 ; but it has not probably come down to us. Some gores which were discovered a few years ago have been held by Henry Stevens and others to belong to this globe ; but they delineate North America as a distinct continent, just as it was delineated in other globes by Schöner of an earlier date, which are well known. It is denied, however, by Nordenskiöld, that these gores can be of so early a date as 1523, and he places them more than twenty years later. Harrisse has later still examined the claim, and contends that the gores cannot possibly be those by Schöner of this date, because it seems apparent from his treatise that the globe of 1523 must have been made in accordance with the theory of an Asiatic extension for North America. If this was so, — and Harrisse's reasons are not without effect, — this theory of an Asiatic extension in North America is traced to Schöner as its originator, so far as is known. If it is a matter of contention as respects Schöner, it is certain as regards a little figure of a globe made by Franciscus Monachus in 1526, which unmistakably represents North America as a part of Asia. This theory got a firm advocate in Orontius Finæus in 1531, who, however, so far departed from the view held by Franciscus as to unite South America to the Northern continent by the Isthmus of Panama,

while the other had substituted a strait in place of that connection. This theory was made prominent in so well known a treatise as the "Novus Orbis" of Grynæus, where the map of Orontius appeared; and at intervals through that century and into the next, other expressions of this view appeared in prominent maps.

If Cartier or his royal master had entertained the expectation of his expedition penetrating into the heart of northern Asia when it started for the gulf back of Newfoundland, it is altogether probable that its equipment would not have been undertaken. It is far more likely that the faith which the earlier expedition of Verrazano had developed in the narrowness of the northern continent prevailed at Paris and St. Malo when Cartier started on his fateful voyage.

NOTE.

The Maiollo, or Maggiolo, map was first brought to the attention of American scholars by the late Mr. James Carson Brevoort in the "Magazine of American History," February and July, 1882. Signor Desimoni first gave a sketch of the North American parts in the "Atti" of the Società Ligure di Storia Patria (Genoa, 1881), vol. xv.; and this was reprinted in Appendice iii. of the *Studio Secondo* of his "Giovanni Verrazano" (Genoa, 1881). The sketch here given was reproduced on a smaller scale by Mr. Winsor in the "Narrative and Critical History of America," vol. iv. p. 39 (1884); and this reduced reproduction was later used by Prof. E. N. Horsford in his "Discovery of America by the Northmen," and in his "John Cabot's Landfall." Mr. A. J. Weise, in his "Discoveries in America to 1525" (New York, 1884), gave a reproduction from the original of both Americas; and this afforded Mr. Winsor the outline which appears in the "Narrative and Critical History," vol. ii. p. 219. Meanwhile Dr. B. F. DeCosta, who had published his "Verrazano the Explorer" (New York, 1880) before Desimoni had brought the Maiollo map forward, caused a negative to be made of the original on four glasses, which showed the whole world. This negative he gave in January, 1892, to the library of Harvard College. The two glasses which show America have been used in the accompanying reproduction. Since De Costa's negatives were made, another of the American parts has been used by Harrisse in the reproduction given in his "Discovery of North America" (London, 1892); and the North American parts have been delineated, but not in *facsimile*, in the Atlas of Kretschmer's "Entdeckung Amerika's" (Berlin, 1892).

